
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

Submitted by: John Pickett

Finding: *(i.e., Conclusions reached after investigation and/or evaluation of facts)*

California Public Resource Code Section 4291 permits a closed forest canopy on private developed parcels. Within 30 feet of a structure PRC 4291 prescribes that homeowners space trees to achieve an average 10 foot canopy separation. PRC 4291 is silent as to whether the canopy separation calculation should include canopy separation due to roads, homes or driveways. A strict interpretation of PRC 4291 requiring a 10 foot crown spacing between all trees on a parcel greatly increases defensible space compliance costs. Including spacing created by homes, driveways and roads, but resulting in an average 10 foot crown spacing would greatly reduce defensible space compliance costs.

Background: *(A short statement justifying the Finding and describing desired outcome(s); usually no more than half a page.)*

Homeowners in the Lake Tahoe Basin are being instructed to create defensible space. Tree removal is the most costly aspect of creating defensible space. Tree removal within 30 feet of a structure is the most expensive tree removal on a developed parcel. Therefore the prescription for tree removal within 30 feet of a structure sets the major cost of reducing fire risk on a developed parcel.

Recommendation(s) *(Based upon an analysis of the Finding, the following recommendation(s) should be made to the Governors):*

It is recommended that Cal Fire directly interpret PRC 4291's tree removal requirements for the Lake Tahoe Basin and educate the local fire agencies on tree removal prescriptions under PRC 4291(4b).

Cal Fire should instruct the fire agencies on tree removal requirements in lodgepole pine forest types, west side mixed conifer forest types and sunny slope mixed conifer forest types.

Impacts of Implementation: *(The implementation of any Recommendation is likely to have specific impacts. Consider potential consequences related to each of the following areas):*

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is REQUIRED:

- ☐ Cost: It could take a Cal Fire expert one week to develop detailed guidelines and a day to educate the Tahoe Basin fire agencies on the application of PRC 4291 on the three forest stand prescriptions. This could cost \$10,000. The interpretation of PRC 4291 in the Lake Tahoe Basin could save Lake Tahoe homeowners up to \$100 million in tree removal costs.
- ☐ Funding source - Cal Fire salary of PRC 4291 expert.
- ☐ Staffing – Cal Fire and local fire agencies
- ☐ Existing regulations and/or laws PRC 4291

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is OPTIONAL:

- ☐ Operational – This proposal has significant implications on the operations of PRC 4291 in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Cost is a primary impediment to implementing PRC 4291. Tree removal is the most expensive aspect of creating defensible space. Thus limiting the number of trees that are required to be removed while maintaining public safety could greatly increase defensible space compliance in the Lake Tahoe Basin.
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Policy
- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Interagency